



(U) ELINT and TechSIGINT Defined

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(U) It is possible that I am the only one who gets a little confused when the terms ELINT, TechELINT and OPELINT are being thrown around in what often seems to be interchangeable ways. But I don't think so. Now, to add to my confusion, I have been hearing another term: TechSIGINT. Huh?

(U) This is the straw that broke the camel's back! I couldn't take it anymore so I asked someone who should know, and this is what he told me:

(U) **ELINT** stands, as always, for Electronic Intelligence.

(U//FOUO) Many, many years ago, the portion of the Intel Community working ELINT (which includes many military organizations) split the discipline of ELINT into the two main categories (OPELINT & TechELINT: these terms have been in use for over 4 decades).

(U//FOUO) **OPELINT** stands for Operational ELINT and its product is often of high value to tactical military users since it gives specific info about a threat emitter's location, how often it operates, it's type, what function it's performing, various parameters and characteristics of it's emission, and the like, but no detailed technical characteristics.

(U//FOUO) **TechELINT** stands for (you guessed it) Technical ELINT. The product from TechELINT comes from careful, detailed analysis of the signals collected from ELINT emitters. The analysis often leads to the understanding of what kind of emitter is radiating the signal, what its function is, and all kinds of data on its characteristics. In fact, for newly intercepted emitters, it is vital to do the TechELINT work so that there will eventually be OPELINT available (since you can't produce the operational product until the emitter is fully known and understood). Also, the tech work is required in order for the military services to build sophisticated threat warning receivers and electronic warfare devices (jammers and more).

(U//FOUO) Now for the nouveau (at least to me) **TechSIGINT** term. Technical SIGINT includes all ELINT, as well as FISINT and PROFORMA and even Communications Externals (external characteristics of COMINT signals; not the internal structure or data/traffic content).

(U) So, how's that? Need any more info? You can find it on the [Weapons & Space web page](#).

(U) Pretty good, I think. But, I'm not putting my name on this just in case it is only me!

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